(b) if so, whether Government have consulted the countries who had conveyed the promise of Pakistani President to India in the past;

(c) if so, the reaction of those countries; and

(d) the steps Government have now firmly taken to meet the situation in view of his violation of international commitment ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) On June 22, 2002 Pakistan President General Musharraf during his interview to the Newsweek, tried to backtrack on his commitment to stop cross-border infiltration on a permanent basis. He claimed that he gave no assurance that 'for years nothing will happen' across the LoC or that he made any commitment on closing the terrorist camps.

(b) and (c) Subsequently, US State Department Spokesman unambiguously clarified that, contrary to what was reported in the Newsweek interview, General Musharraf had indeed given the assurance to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage on stopping cross-border infiltration on a permanent basis. It was also stated that General Musharraf had reiterated his commitments of putting an end to cross-border infiltration on a permanent basis to President George Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell during their conversations. The UK also rebutted the claims made by General Musharraf in his interview.

(d) Government are firmly resolved to continue taking all necessary measures to defeat Pakistan's sponsorships of cross-border terrorism in India.

Facilities to Mansarovar pilgrims

†202. DR. A. K. PATEL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the number of pilgrims to Mansarovar is on the constant rise every year;

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether Government are also aware that the pilgrims have to come across with a host of inconveniences during the pilgrimage to Mansarovar; and

(c) whether Government propose to provide specific facilities during the pilgrimage by identifying the inconveniences emerging therein ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) 560 *Yatris* are selected every year through a transparent computer generated random selection process following public advertisement.

(b) to (c) It is the constant endeavour of Government to improve and upgrade facilities for the *Yatris*. Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN) arranges boarding and lodging for *Yatris* on the Indian side. MEA provides Rs. 3,250/- per *Yatri* to KMVN to partially offset the expenditure incurred by the *Yatris*. Government provides free medical inspection and assistance, and security and escort cover upto Lipulekh Pass; insurance cover and communicaton links for the duration of the *Yatra*. A Liaison Officer is attached to each batch of *Yatris*. The Delhi Government provides free stay to *Yatris* at Ashok Yatri Niwas in New Delhi for 4-5 days during their onward and return journey.

Closure of Indian Embassies

203. DR. ABRAR AHMED : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry of Finance has recommended to his Ministry for closure of seven Indian Embassies;

(b) if so, the names of such Embassies; and

(c) the amount etc. likely to be saved from such closure ?